

Basic Object Photography on a Budget



WILLIAM J. HILL
TEXAS ARTISANS & ARTISTS ARCHIVE

BAYOU BEND COLLECTION & GARDENS
MFA  The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston





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Welcome to the William J. Hill Texas Artisans and Artists Archive. In the 19th century, Texas artisans & artists created ceramics, furniture, textiles, metalworks, photographs, paintings, and works on paper in this growing region. Many significant and beautiful objects and art were produced, but far too little is known about these artists. Their lives, practices, and products are captured in the census records, city directories, newspapers and primary sources included in the Hill Archive.

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Browse by category below, or search for a name or term, to learn more about these individuals and their work.



Occupations



Texas Cities & Counties



Names & People



Objects



**Archival Materials,
Ephemera, & Tools**



Census Records



City Directory Records



**Newspaper Articles &
Advertisements**



**Research &
Publications**

**Project News
&
Highlights**



[*https://texasartisans.mfah.org*](https://texasartisans.mfah.org)



Pitcher



Net Collar



Shoulder knife



Music Stand.



Silver Cup



El Paso del Norte



**Oval Tilt-Top
Table**



Footstool



**Hide Bottom
Chair**



Wardrobe



Eyeglasses



Bed



Basket



Cupboard



**Young girl.
(photograph)**

Essential Equipment

CAMERA(S)



Canon Powershot G15
(point-and-shoot)



Nikon D3300, DSLR camera
Lenses: 35mm, 18-55mm, 55-200mm

TRIPOD



Oben AC 1300
3-section aluminum tripod

COLOR GUIDE



DGK Kustom Balance

ART BOARD, PAPER ROLL, LEVEL



Ideal Equipment

BACKDROP STAND



Impact Background Support
with adjustable 12 ft. crossbar

LIGHT STANDS



Impact Light Kit
adjustable 6 ft. stands

REMOTE SHUTTER



Vello FreeWave
varies by camera model

LIGHT BOX



Impact Light Shed
2' x 2' x 3' (collapsible)

COPY STAND

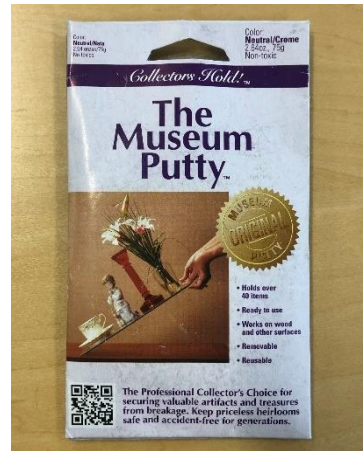


Testrite Copy Stand
capture area up to 22" x 37"

Other Useful Equipment



Circular polarizer helps reduce glare from glass



Museum putty or similar, for keeping objects in place



Tabletop tripod, fits in spaces the full tripod does not



Kneeling pads for working on the floor



Teflon & felt furniture sliders to move large items onto paper



Wooden or felt covered blocks to support objects in various positions



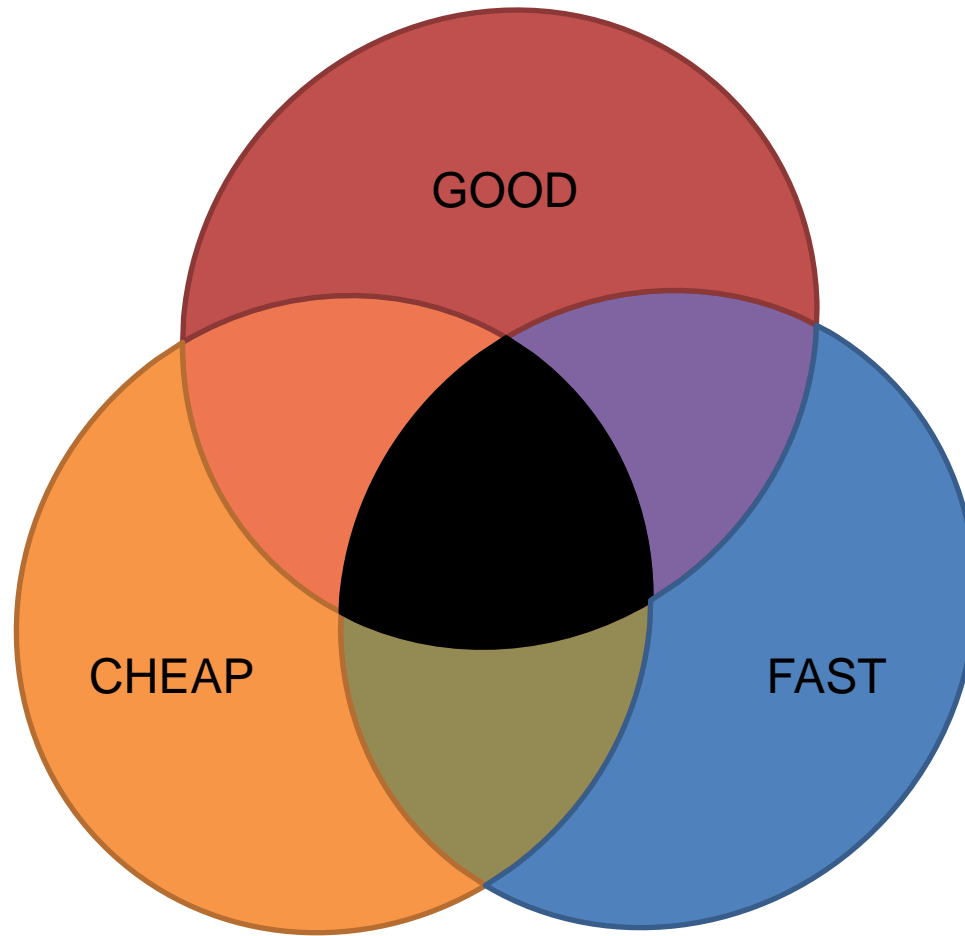
Gaffer tape, for securing paper to walls, floors, etc.



(rice-filled socks) weights to secure light stand & tripod

A person with long hair is crouching on a patterned tile floor in a room with a fireplace and a round table. They are adjusting a camera on a tripod. The room has a fireplace with a mantel, a round table with a lamp, and a window with shutters. The text "Setting up" is overlaid in the center.

Setting up



Choosing a Work Area



Consider:

- Lighting
- Space
- Permanence

Choosing a Set Up



Consider objects by size:

- Floor set up
- Table-top set up
- Width of object vs backdrop paper
- Space between object and camera



Lighting:

- Space for extra lights, if needed
- Does existing lighting help or hurt
- Are the objects reflective?

Seamless Background



Paper roll on background stand

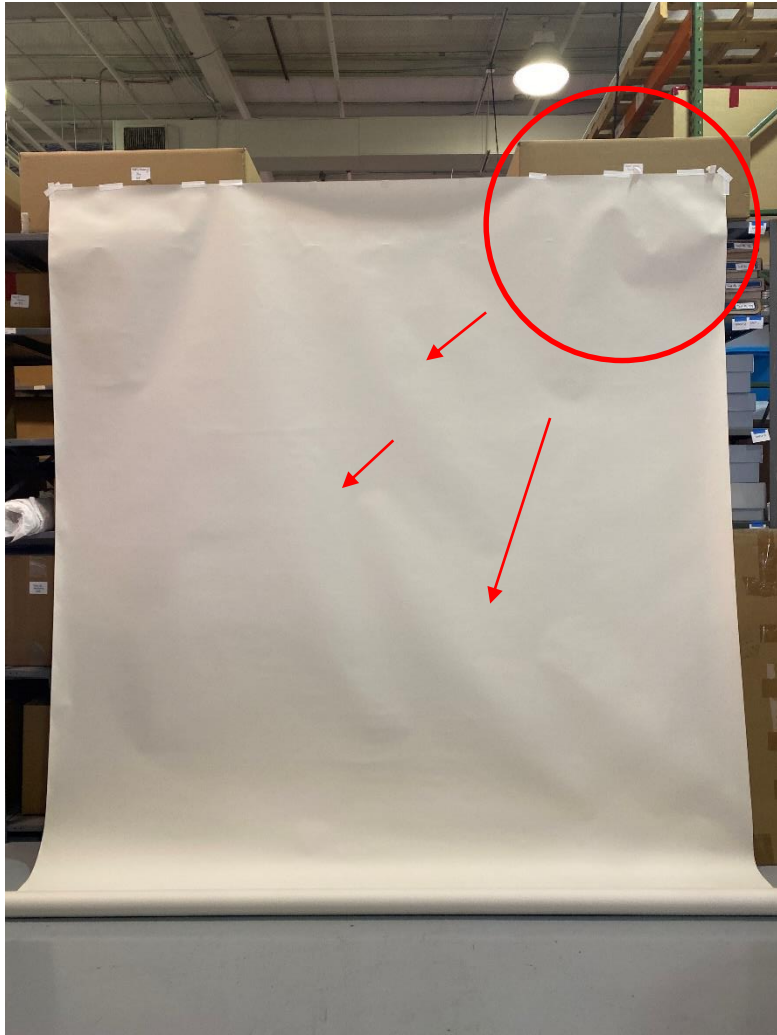


Light box fitted with seamless paper or poster board

Seamless Background



Seamless Background



Seamless Background



Seamless Background



dirt spots, stains

wrinkles

bunches,
outlines floor boards



Seamless Background

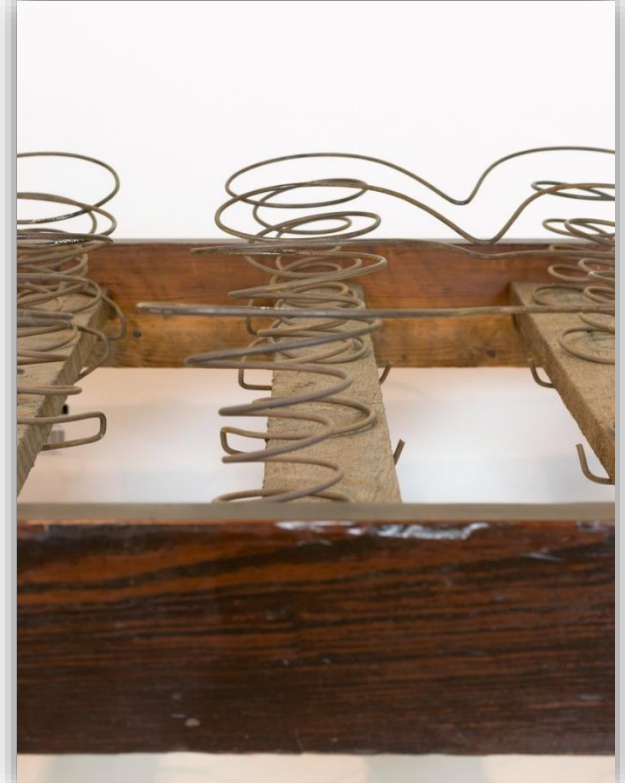


Oversized items



Background paper fully under object and taped partially up wall to hide baseboards and patterned carpet

Oversized items



Poster board, art board, and other paper can be used for close-ups when not working with a full backdrop

Lighting



Enhance the object by brightening dark areas, avoid creating shadows, hotspots, and glares

Light 1: brightening up left side, as overhead lights are not evenly distributed

Light 2: adding light to the bottom half of the table, which is shadowed by the table top

Lighting



Enhance the object by brightening dark areas, avoid creating shadows, hotspots, and glares



Lighting



This sunroom has 3 walls of frosted glass, ideal natural lighting!



Outdoor Lighting



Outdoor Lighting



Seamless background created using paper, tape, and clips



Excellent set up for reflective ceramic glazes, natural light is always preferred

Outdoor Lighting



Outdoor Lighting



Chairs look so inviting
in dappled lighting

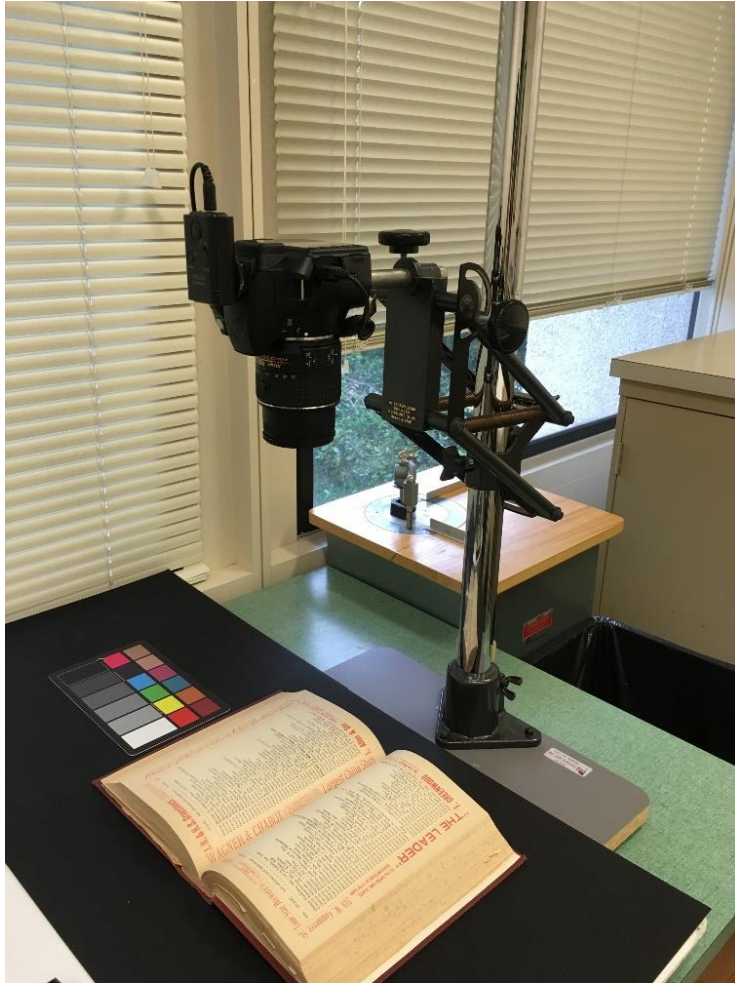
Light Box



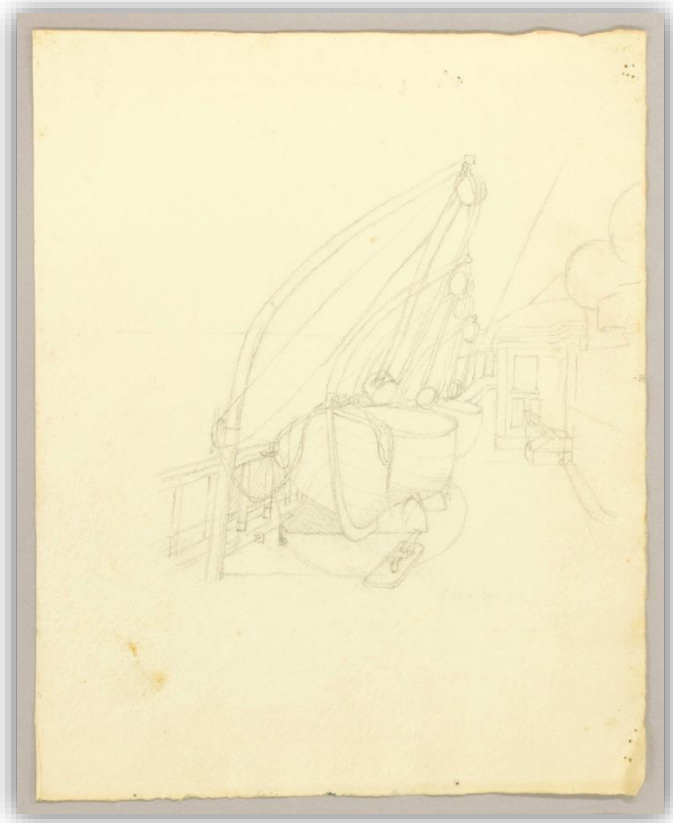
Light Box



Copy Stand



Copy Stand



Tripod as Copy Stand



Tripod as Copy Stand



tripod + level + sock weights = copy stand!

Tripod as Copy Stand



Level the camera, level the object
Small supports as necessary



Pointers for holding pages
(disposable chopsticks)



Taking Photographs

Equipment during Photography



Color card: use in every picture if possible



Remote shutter release, keeps your hands off the camera



Levels help prevent image warping/distortion

Getting Started



- If using phone or tablet camera, clean with a lens cloth (often)
- Have object information at hand to reference potential areas of interest to photograph, pencil & paper to record anything noted during photography (see form handout)
- Never depend on zoom function, physically get closer; have extra cameras ready for capturing strange angles
- Have extra equip on hand (table on right)
- Prepare area for a series of objects (table on left)
 - Start smallest to largest
 - Group similar objects/materials

Getting Started



Work small to large
Similar-sized/type items



Consider the Object



What is this?

Use Props or Supports

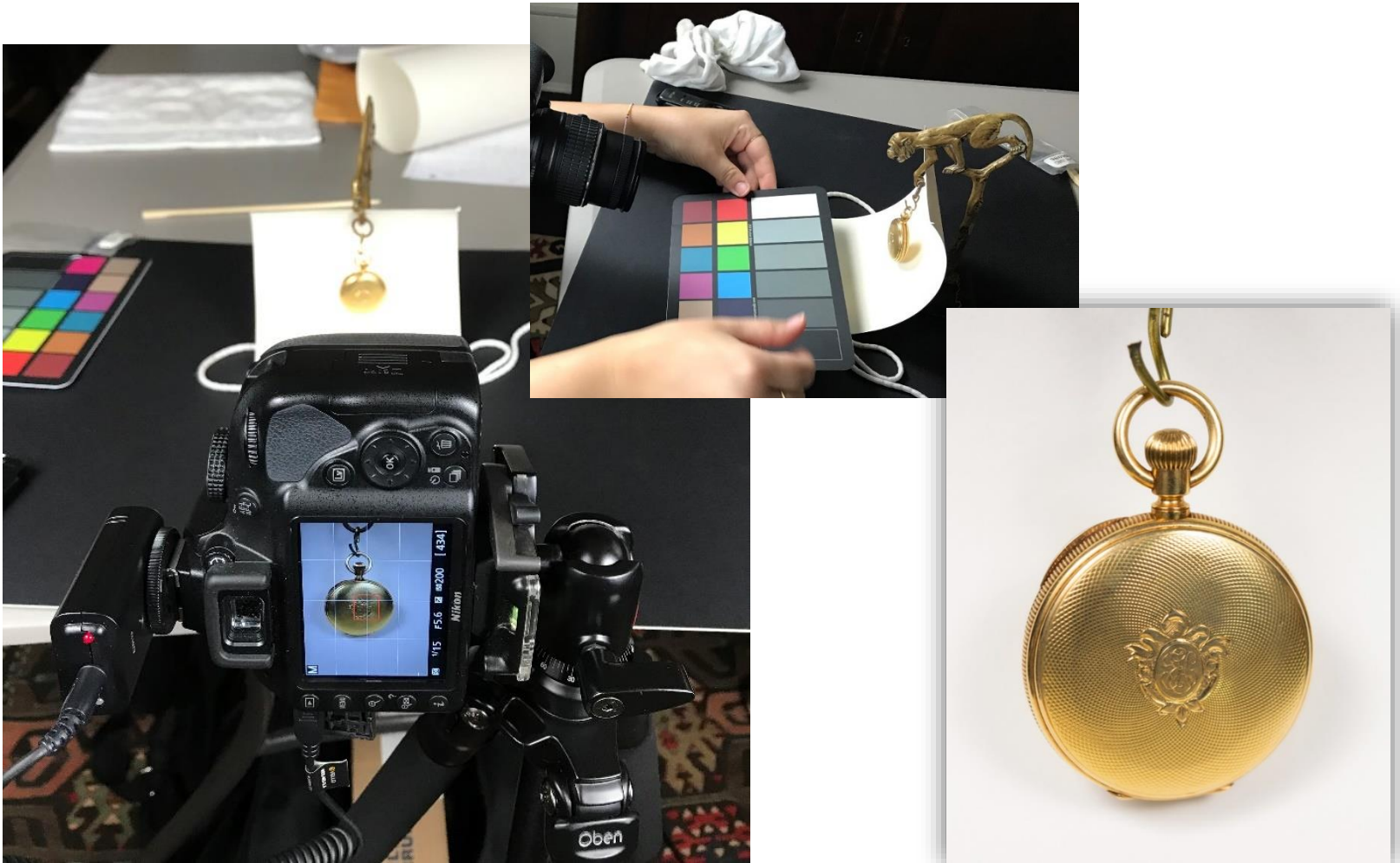


It's a bonnet!

Work in Contrast



Consider Final Image

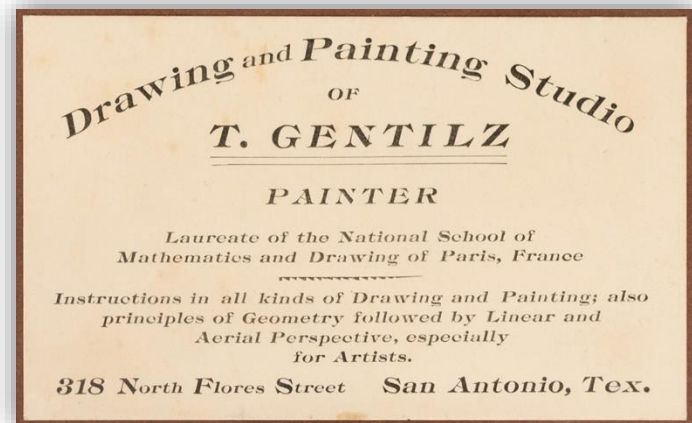


Use Gridlines





Use Gridlines



Composition



Composition: Bad

- Background color too similar, cannot distinguish object edges
- Object too close to edge of frame, cannot straighten or crop
- Ruler touching object
- No color card present



Composition: Better

- ✓ Contrasting background color; can distinguish object edges/details
- ✓ Color card is present
- Ruler is too close to crop out
- Object is close to edge, not straight
- Object is not centered in frame

Composition



Composition: Best

- ✓ Contrasting background color; can distinguish object edges/details
- ✓ Color card and ruler can be cropped out
- ✓ Object is centered in frame
- ✓ Object is straight

Consistency



Captain's Chair



Chair



Jug



Jug



Chair



Chair



Jug



Jug

Consistency



Spoon



Spoon



Spoon



Fork



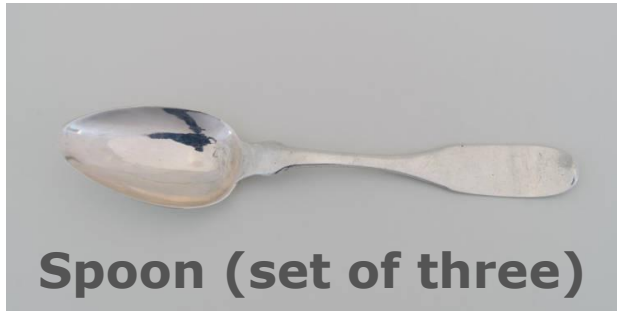
Fork



Forks, Set of Six



Sets of items



Moveable Parts



Open/closed items





Oversized Objects



Oversized Objects



Oversized Objects



Oversized Objects

Tape edges of
paper down to
slide objects on
without tearing



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Immoveable Objects



Mirrors & Reflective Objects



Lenses



Lenses

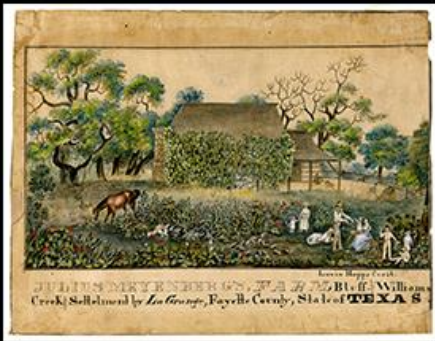


Lenses



Putting it into Practice





Live Demonstration



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